



# Commander's Intent

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Colonel Paul Lefebvre

# Commander's Battlespace Area Evaluation



**MSTP**

**Intent**

**CCIRs**

**CBAE**

**Battlespace**

**Centers  
of Gravity**

# Effective Intent



MSTP

- What are the measures of an effective intent?
- Is intent important in garrison?
- What is the relationship of mission tactics to commander's intent?



# Personal Expression

MSTP

I suppose dozens of operation orders have gone out in my name, but I never, throughout the war, actually wrote one myself ... *One part of the order I did, however, draft myself—the intention...* It is the one overriding expression of will by which everything in the order and every action by every commander and soldier in the army must be dominated.

Field Marshal William Slim

# Purpose



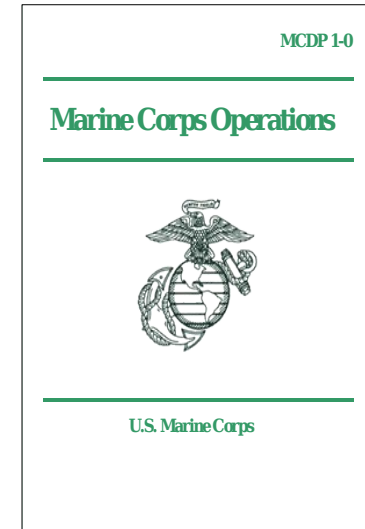
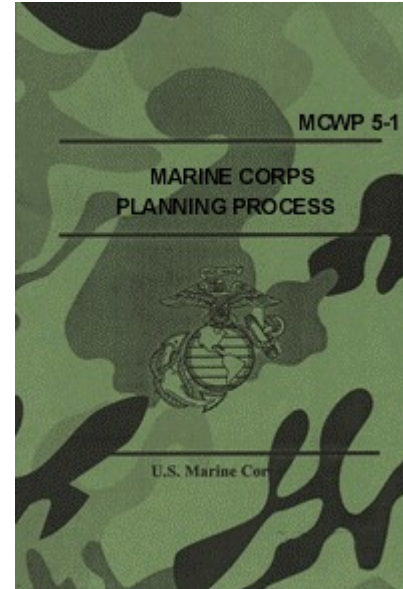
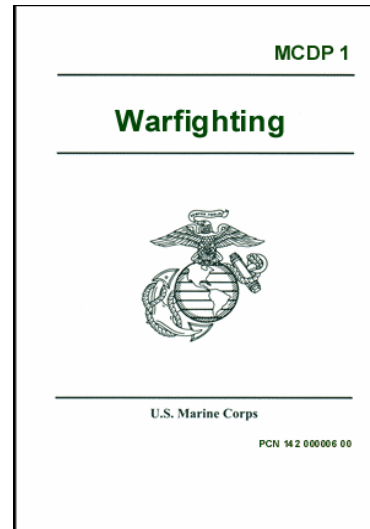
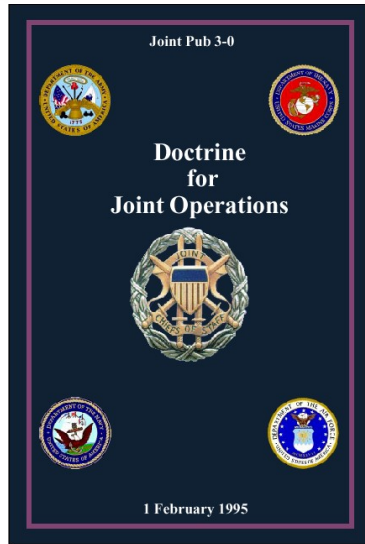
MSTP

- Describe the importance of a clear commander's intent
- Describe how intent drives and is derived from the planning process
- Define the elements of commander's intent

# References



MSTP





# Commander's Intent

MSTP

- Commander's intent is designed to help subordinates understand the larger context of their actions
- The purpose of intent is to allow subordinates to exercise judgment and initiative - to depart from the original plan when the unforeseen occurs - in a way consistent with the higher commander's aim

MCDP 1



# Key Features Of Intent

MSTP

- Describes the purpose of the operation in a common Joint/Coalition/MAGTF language ... words are important
- A personal expression of the Commander, spoken in the “single battle” voice of the MAGTF Commander
- Easily understood, clear & concise
- Nested HHQ Intent through “Mission Tactics”





# Mission Tactics

MSTP

MISSION = TASK + PURPOSE

How the task is accomplished  
is left to the subordinate

Senior prescribes the method  
of execution only to the  
degree essential for  
coordination



# Commander's Intent

MSTP

## Joint Definition

Commander's personal expression of why an operation is being conducted and what he hopes to achieve

JP 3-0

A concise expression of the purpose of the operation, not a summary of the concept of operations

JP 3-0



# Commander's Intent?

MSTP

“My intent is to use maneuver warfare to maximize combined arms, gain and maintain tempo, and focus strength against weakness to put them on the horns of a dilemma.”

# The Horns Of A Dilemma



MSTP



CVs

-Purpose  
-Method  
-End State





# Historical Use Of Intent

MSTP

## U.S. Grant 1864-1865

- "The art of war is simple enough. Find out where your enemy is. Get at him as soon as you can. Strike him as hard as you can, and keep moving."
- "I shall take no backward steps."
- "When in doubt, fight."



# Historical Use Of Intent

MSTP

Lord Nelson 9 October 1805

- “But ... in case signals can neither be seen or perfectly understood, no captain can do very wrong if he places his ship alongside that of an enemy.”



# Enduring Intent

MSTP

“On that basis, and in compliance with God's order, we issue the following fatwa to all Muslims:

The ruling to kill the Americans and their allies -- civilians and military -- is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it, *in order to* liberate the al-Aqsa Mosque (Jerusalem) and the holy mosque (Mecca) from their grip, and *in order for their armies to move out of all the lands of Islam, defeated and unable to threaten any Muslim*. This is in accordance with the words of Almighty God, "and fight the pagans all together as they fight you all together," and "fight them until there is no more tumult or oppression, and there prevail justice and faith in God.”

Shaykh Usamah Bin-Muhammad Bin-Ladin

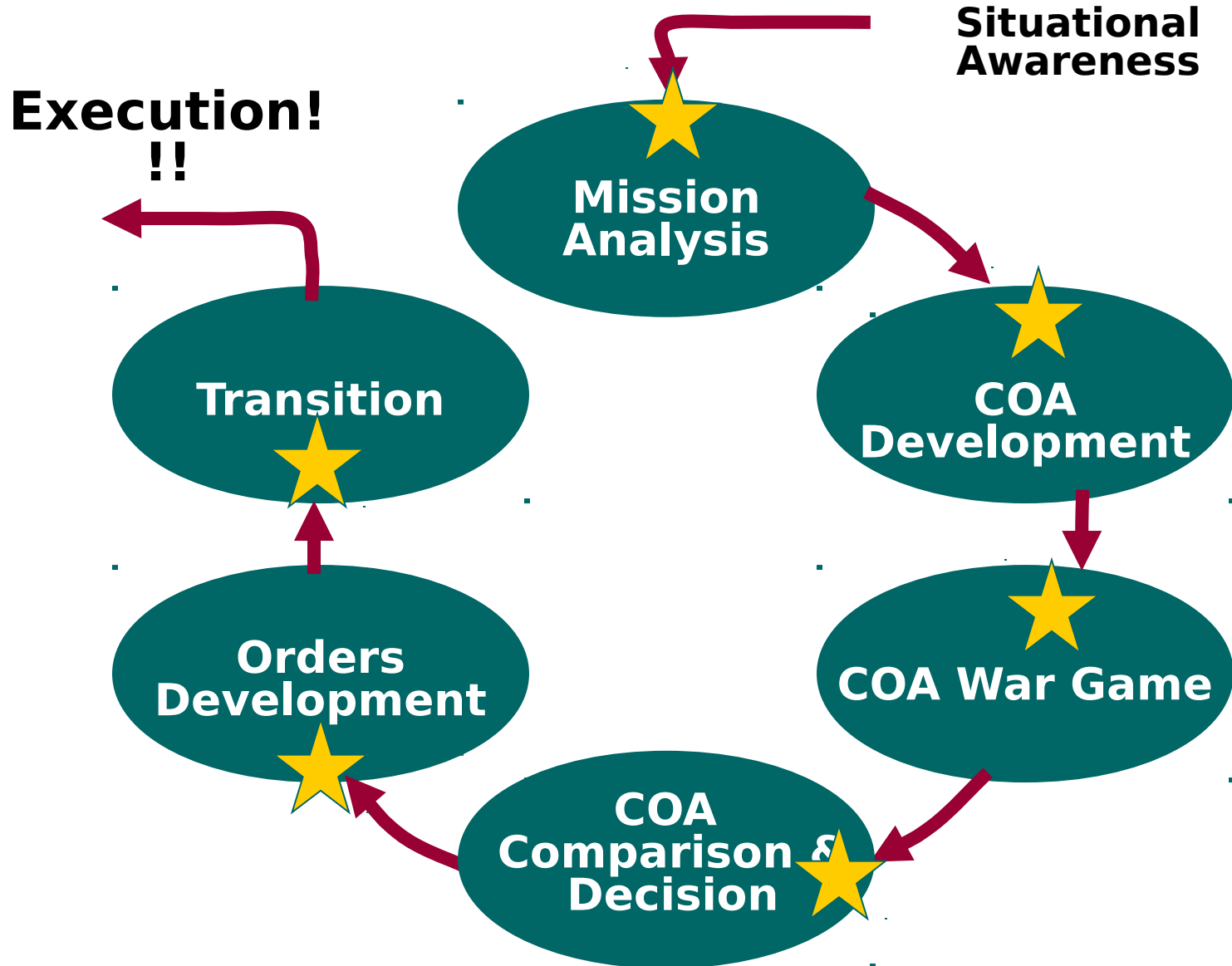
Al-Quds al- 'Arabi --- 23 Feb 98



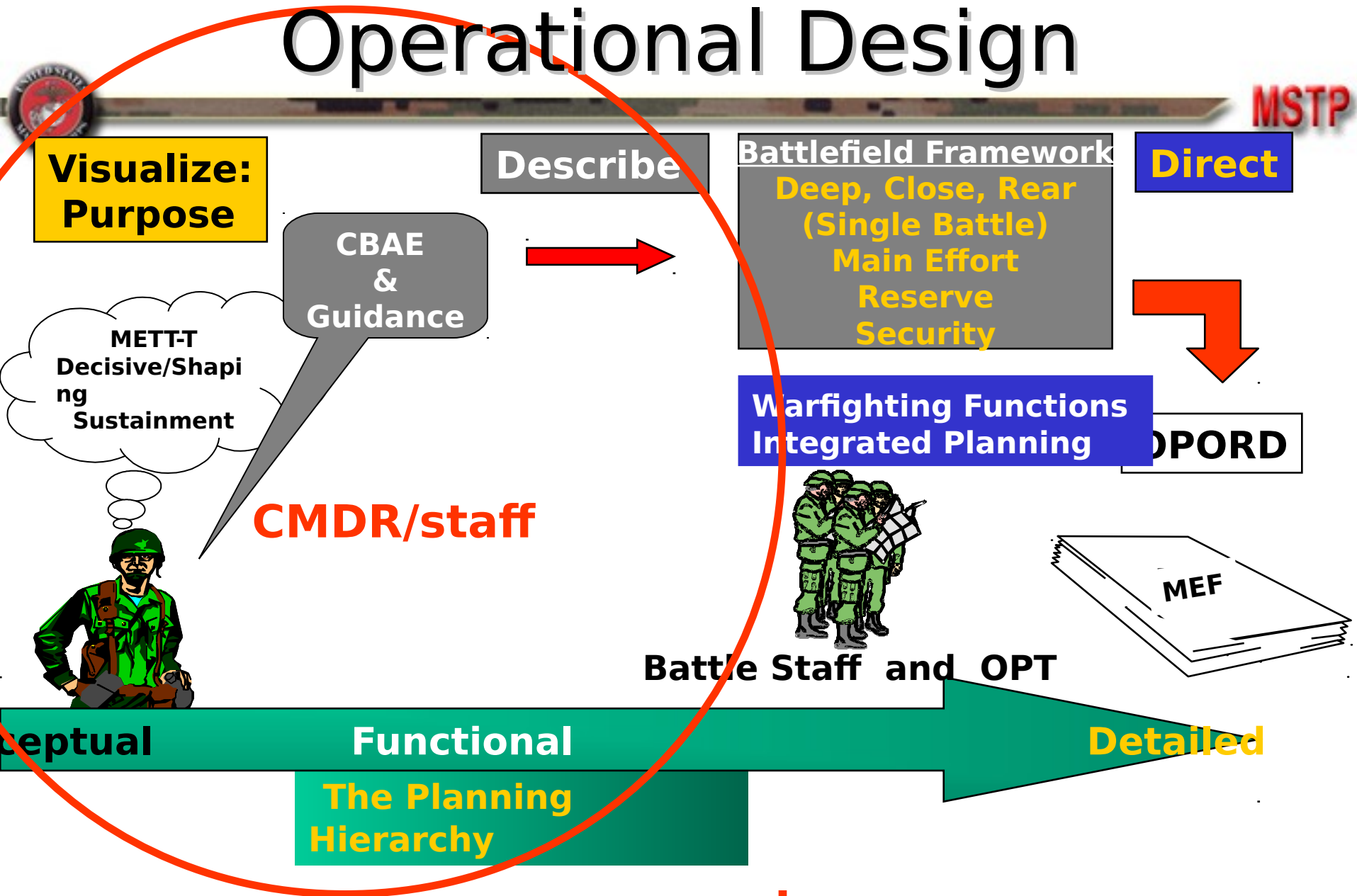
# Marine Corps Planning Process



**MSTP**



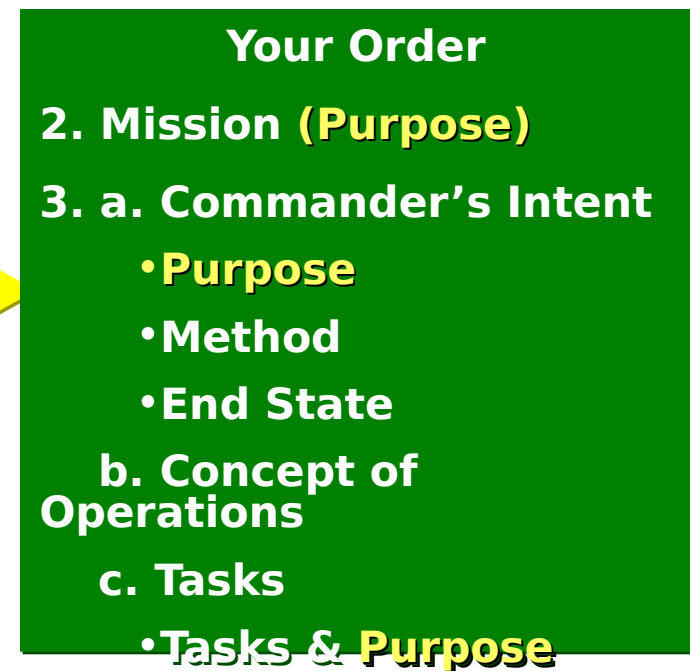
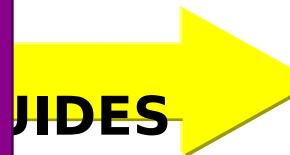
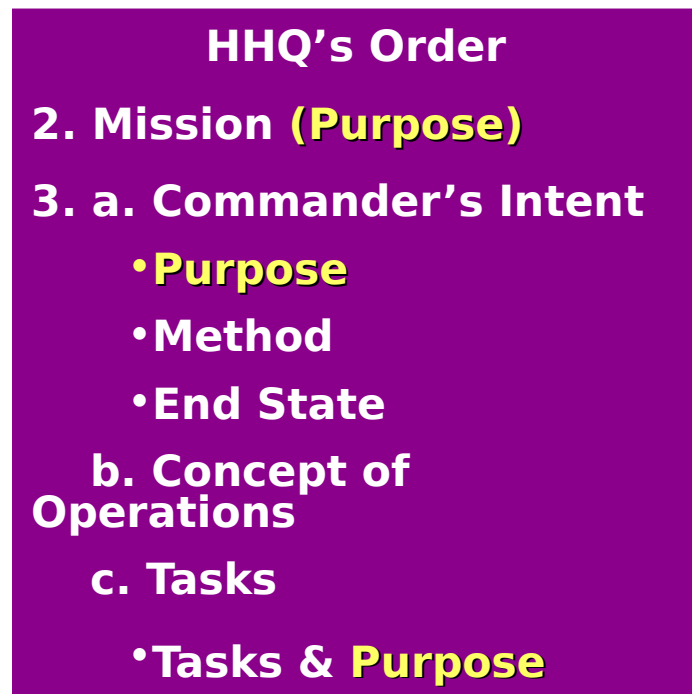
# Operational Design



# Consistent And Compatible?



MSTP





# Mission Analysis

MSTP

## Input:

- **HHQ**
  - *Order*
  - *Intel products*
- **Commander's Orientation**
- **CBAE**
  - **Battlespace**
  - **Intent**
    - **Understand the purpose**
  - **COG**
  - **CCIR**

## Process:

- **Information requirements**
- **Assumptions**
- **Constraints / restraints**
- **Identify tasks**
- **Draft mission statement**

Staff  
Estimates

## Output:

- **Mission statement**
- **Refined intent**
  - **End State ??**
- **Planning guidance**
- **Warning Order**

**IPB**



# Format For Cmdr's Intent

MSTP

- Purpose/Intent Why?
- Method “How he envisions achieving a decision”
- End State Picture of the future



# Purpose

MSTP

## Why? ... In Order to

Allow Block  
Cause  
Create  
Deceive  
Deny  
Enable  
Screen

Influence  
Open  
Prevent  
Protect  
Restore  
Support  
Surprise

TTP -- use "in order to" or "IOT" MSTP Pamphlet 5-0.3



# Format For Cmdr's Intent

MSTP

- Purpose/Intent Why?
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- End State Picture of the future

# Linking Purpose And End State Method



MSTP

Decisive (Main Effort), Shaping (Supporting), & Sustainment Actions for the force as a whole

Some possible areas to address:

- Decisive action and relationship to end state
- Shaping actions and relationship to decisive action
- Advantages
- COG/Critical Vulnerabilities to be exploited
- Essential relationships or tasks
- Info Ops – Key effects to be achieved



# Historical Use Of Intent



MSTP

Grant communicating intent to Sherman

- It is my design to work all parts of the Army together, and, somewhat towards a common center . . . You, I propose to move against Johnston's Army, to break it up and to get into the interior of the enemy's country as far as you can, inflicting all the damage you can against their war resources,

from Campaigning with Grant

by Horace Porter



# Format For Cmdr's Intent

MSTP

- Purpose/Intent Why?
- Method “How he envisions achieving a decision”
- End State Picture of the future

# Relationship Between Purpose & End State



MSTP

... The envisioned end state serves as a distant and general aiming point rather than as a specific objective

MCDP 5

A set of required conditions that, when achieved, attain the aims set for the campaign or operation

MCRP 5-12A

End State: the set of conditions, that when achieved, satisfies the PURPOSE of the operation

MCDP 1-0



# Intent Test

MSTP

1. Is it in nested with HHQ intent in purpose and end state?
2. Does it allow for decentralized decision making through mission tactics?
3. Does it take into account the abilities and relationships of all Commanders – Marine, Joint and Coalition?
4. Is it clearly understood two levels down?
5. Does it provide a basis for decisive action on the disordered, chaotic, uncertain, and “untidy” battlefield?



# Communication Strategies

MSTP

Written and/or Verbal,  
**IOT** Achieve Implicit  
Understanding

Implicit???



# 1<sup>st</sup> Division: OIF

MSTP

How many times have we seen commander's intent developed by the staff, lethargically reviewed by the commander, and then delivered in a briefing with the least bit of emotion?

The division fought by commander's intent - a statement of intent that reflected the commander's personality, intuition, sense of purpose and then delivered to every Marine and sailor in the Division.

Prior to crossing the LD there were a thousand issues the commander needed to address. One issue that was never compromised was the commander taking the time to speak with every unit and deliver his intent.

LtCol Lethin, *MCG Feb 04*



# Written Techniques

MSTP

- Single paragraph – Narrative
- Sub-paragraphs
- Sub-paragraphs with Assignments

# Single Paragraph – Narrative



MSTP

## **3. Execution**

**a. Commander's Intent. I intend to Restore the Blueland border by simultaneously maneuvering combat power and logistic forces, through existing or created gaps to defeat enemy second echelon forces. My endstate is enemy second echelon forces defeated and our force positioned along the enemy/Blueland border operationally and logistically prepared to continue offensive operations into enemy territory as needed by the JTF.**





# Sub-Paragraphs

MSTP

## 3. Execution

### a. Commander's Intent

- Purpose. Restore the Blueland border.
- Method. I intend to simultaneously maneuver combat power and logistic forces, through existing or created gaps to defeat enemy second echelon forces.
- End State. Enemy second echelon forces defeated and our force positioned along the enemy / Blueland border operationally and logistically prepared to continue offensive operations into enemy territory as needed by the ITE

# Sub-Paragraphs With Assignments



## a. Commander's Intent

MSTP

**Purpose.** Restore the Blueland border

**Method.** I see the **enemy's tactical COGs** within our AO as his armor and indirect fire systems. These systems are critical but also vulnerable due to their exposure and lack of air defense. **Our tactical COGs** are Marine aviation and tactical mobility. **Asymmetric advantage** is gained through the application of air power.

We will **Shape** the battlespace through kinetic and non-kinetic means to neutralize the enemy's IADS, artillery and armor reserve while degrading his C4. During shaping it is essential that our **CSS assets are positioned well forward** and prepared for rapid movement. Once these conditions are met, we will simultaneously maneuver combat power and logistic forces through existing or created gaps to defeat enemy second echelon forces.

**End State.** Enemy second echelon forces defeated and our force positioned along the enemy / Blueland border, operationally and logistically prepared to continue offensive operations into enemy territory as needed by the JTF.



# Implicit Communications

MSTP

- Personal Familiarity
- Face-to-face .... Verbal
  - Tone and voice inflection
  - Body Language
  - VTC/TAPE/CD
- Brief the order
- Elicit feedback



# Intent Bottom Line

MSTP

- Capitalizes on “USMC Maneuver Warfare Ethos ...” invigorates the chain of command with the essence of “trust and confidence”
- “Enables effective decentralized decision making”
- “Encourages initiative”
- “Increases tempo”

# Does He Know Why?



MSTP





# Why Intent?

MSTP

No plan survives contact  
with the enemy

Von Moltke

from Dictionary of Military  
and Naval Quotations

**... but Commander's intent does**



*Questions?*